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Heat aid cuts raise tempers

Critics: Bush plan puts needy at risk

By JANE NORMAN
REGISTER WASHINGTON BUREAU

Washington, D.C. — Potential cutbacks in a popular heating assistance program for low-income Americans has some members of Congress steamed at the White House.

The dispute comes amid predictions of double-digit increases in utility bills this winter as temperatures start to fall.

"Happy holidays from the Bush administration," Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, a Democrat, said in a written statement. "This Christmas, modest-income families and senior citizens struggling to pay for rising home heating costs won't even find coal in their stockings from the Bush administration."

A spokesman for the president, however, says the needy will ultimately end up with about the same level of support they received last winter if temperatures dip.

The federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program aids the poor in paying their energy costs, but state directors of the program say they are preparing cutbacks because of a Bush administration proposal to reduce non-emergency money for it to $1.4 billion from

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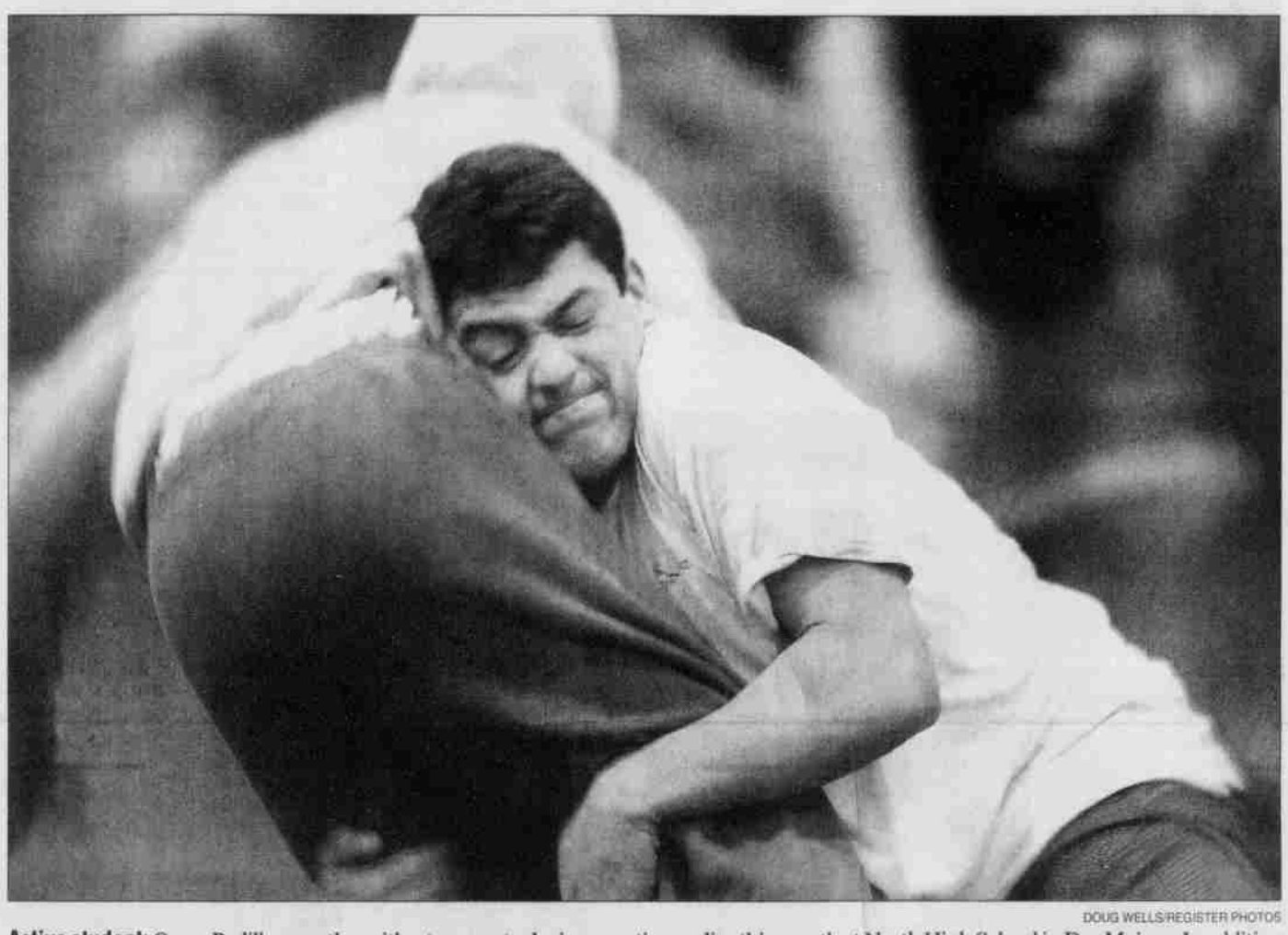
"Happy holidays from the Bush administration."

— Sen. Tom Harkin, on potential cutbacks in a federal heating assistance program

1998 Omar Padilla struggles to speak and write English

2002 Padilla wins scholarships and is at the top of his class



DOUG WELLS/REGISTER PHOTOS

Active student: Omar Padilla wrestles with a teammate during practice earlier this month at North High School in Des Moines. In addition to the varsity wrestling squad, Padilla is involved in the debate team and ROTC, and he helped co-found the Latino Club.

A bridge to success

By KATHY A. BOLTEN
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

Omar Padilla looks at bridges differently than most people.

The Des Moines North High School senior studies how the structures are made. He focuses on the material used in their construction. He examines their myriad lengths and widths.

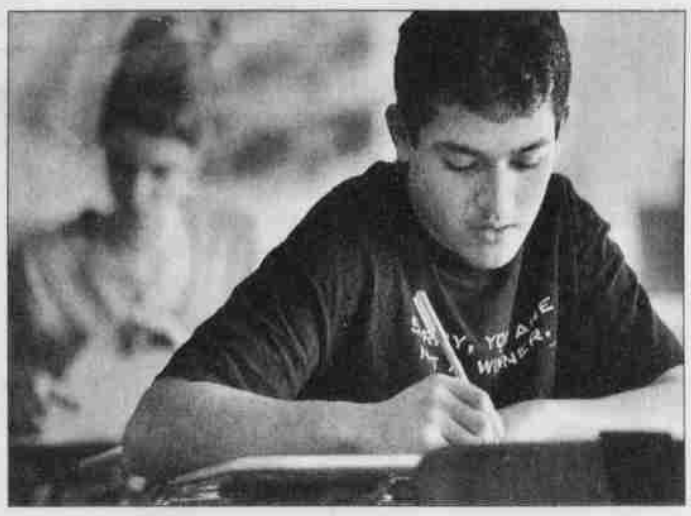
Padilla looks at bridges differently because they represent something more than a way for vehicles to get from here to there. Bridges can be exciting or they can be scary, but they can't be avoided, he wrote in an essay four years ago.

Bridges take people from one stage of life to the next.

"I read his essay and thought, 'Wow, how insightful. I have to get to know this student,'" North's principal, Joan Roberts, recalled.

Padilla, who has moved between the United States, Mexico and Guatemala, had been enrolled at North only a few weeks when he wrote the bridge essay. At the time, his ability to speak English was poor. His reading and writing skills were even worse.

Four years later, the 18-year-old takes advanced academic courses, tutors Latino students and wins scholarships. He and six other North students hope to keep their grades up this semester so that in May they can graduate with a class ranking of Number One.



For Padilla, the feat would be significant. Rarely does a student who spends part of his or her high school career learning English graduate at the top of the class, said Joan Lyons, a counselor at North.

Half of Latino students enrolled in urban high schools earn enough credits to graduate. Graduation statistics for Latino males are even more dire. Poor English-speaking skills often are cited as a reason many Latinos fail. Crimes lure some; jobs attract others.

Padilla has avoided obstacles and distractions. He knows that, like a bridge, failure is not an option.

"My family is not rich," the soft-spoken teen said. "I don't want to live like that, so I have to graduate. Since the beginning, I have always known I can't fail — I haven't had the choice to fail."

Padilla said he realized at the beginning of his junior year that his

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"... if they see I can do it, then they will have confidence that they can do it, too."

— Omar Padilla, on inspiring his family members

Alleged cloners: 'Eve' flies to U.S. today

The company keeps details under wraps but says DNA proof of the baby's status could be available soon.

FROM REGISTER NEWS SERVICES

New York, N.Y. — The company that claims to have created "Eve," the world's first cloned human, said the baby would come home to the United States today, but scientists who study identical twins said they didn't expect the child — if she exists — to be a replica.

"Eve" will fly into the country with her family, Brigitte Boisselier said Sunday, two days after she announced the birth. Boisselier is chief executive of Clonaid, a cloning company affiliated with a religious sect that believes space aliens launched life on Earth.

To be able to prove that "Eve" is a clone, Boisselier said she had accepted an offer by a former ABC News science editor who has chosen independent experts to check DNA from the mother and the newborn for a match. Results could be ready "by the end of the week or early next week," Boisselier said.

Boisselier has previously said only that the child's mother is American. Other details were being kept secret to protect the family, she said.

Even if Clonaid's claim is proved, "Eve" will not be a carbon copy of her mother, experts said.

Research has shown that even identical twins aren't completely alike. Scientists who study how genes shape us say that's an important lesson for anyone trying to predict how much a human clone will resemble its progenitor.

For all their differences, "identical twins are more identical than clones will ever be," said Robert Plomin of the Institute of Psychiatry in London.

As a group, identical twins are in fact more similar to each other in personality than ordinary siblings or fraternal twins, who develop from two separate eggs. That's true even when the identical twins are reared apart, said Nancy Segal, director of the Twin Studies Center at California State University in Fullerton. So that shows a clear influence of genes, she said.

But even identical twins are influenced by nongenetic factors — starting with the womb and extending to parents, friends, opportunities in life, chance occurrences — that influence who we are.

Since a clone and its progenitor would be born into different families at different times, these nongenetic factors would be expected to be more powerful, experts said.

Miami cheers on free-spending Iowa fans

By KEN FUSON
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

Miami, Fla. — With apologies to Meredith Willson, it's time to rewrite the lyrics to the Iowa fight song:

The word is "Spend! Spend! Spend!" for IOWA,

Let every cash reg-is-ter ring;

The word is "Spend! Spend! Spend!" for IOWA,

Pretend you live just like a king (Go Broke!)

Come on and "Spend! Spend! Spend!" for IOWA,

Come on and spend until they lend you hundreds more.

The word is "Spend! Spend! Spend!" for IOWA,

Come here rich, leave poor.

John Bollard figures he will spend between $3,000 and $4,000 to watch his beloved Iowa Hawkeyes take on USC in Thursday's Orange Bowl game.

So where did the Pocahontas man and his friend, Todd Beneke, head Saturday on their first afternoon in Florida?

To the Dania Beach jai alai fronton, where players catch balls, called *pelotas*, in woven baskets, called *cestas*, and fling the balls against a wall at 170 miles an hour, while people such as Bollard and Beneke, called *suckers*, bet on who will win.

"It's just like dog racing," Bollard said.

Memo to Gov. Tom Vilsack: As you and members of the state Legislature try to solve

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Bowl coverage

HAWKEYES: USC coach continues school's legacy.

CYCLONES: Dan McCarney shares Iowa ties with a Boise assistant coach.

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BEST OF 2002

Iowa business

The economic downturn played a role in each of Iowa's Top 5 Business Stories of 2002, ranked by Register Business Editor David Elbert. The top story, the revival of downtown Des Moines, gives credit to local leaders for taking bold action.
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Top albums

Register music critic Kyle Munson ranks the best releases of 2002. Topping the list is "Says Pop" by North Carolina brothers Roman Candle.
IowaLife, Page 5B

National mood

Columnist Dave Barry takes a month-by-month look at what caused restless nights in 2002.
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TO OUR READERS

Rob Borsellino's column will return soon.

WEATHER

HIGH 38-55 LOW 12-26

Partly cloudy and unseasonably mild.
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